

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-113. Canceled.

114. (Currently Amended) A method by which multiple clients access content on a network and preserve access indefinitely to content that is no longer on the network, the method comprising:

retrieving, for each of the multiple clients, data items of content stored at network storage locations, accessing the data items via a proxy server;

providing a data repository different from the network storage locations and connected to the proxy server;

determining a digital fingerprint of a content data item that is one of the data items of content retrieved for one of the multiple clients from one of the network storage locations;

testing for whether the content data item is already stored in the data repository by comparing the digital fingerprint of the content data item to the digital fingerprints of content data items already in storage in the data repository;

ensuring that a stored data item identical to the content data item exists in the data repository by storing the content data item in the data repository if comparing establishes that a data item identical to the content data item is not already stored in the data repository, and not storing the content data item in the data repository if comparing establishes that a data item identical to the content data item is already stored in the data repository;

associating the stored data item with an access authorization credential uniquely associated with the one of the multiple clients or a person associated with the one; and

assigning an expiration time to the stored data item, before which time both modification and deletion are prohibited;

whereby the stored data item is preserved and can be retrieved, using the access authorization credential, for an indefinite period after the content data item is no longer present at the network storage locations;

wherein, after the expiration time is assigned and before the expiration time has passed, the one of the multiple clients reassigns can change the expiration time to a later time; but wherein no action taken by the one of the multiple clients can cause the expiration time to be changed to an earlier time or cause the stored data item to be deleted ~~at an earlier time than the expiration time;~~

wherein after the expiration time has passed deletion of the data item is allowed; and

wherein the indefinite period extends at least until the expiration time; and

wherein the data repository retains a copy of a plurality of data items of content accessed by the one of the multiple clients via the proxy server, thereby preserving the content after it has been altered or removed from the network.

115. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 114 in which the data repository comprises a plurality of storage sites, and a set of rules governing the assignment of the expiration time are communicated to the plurality of storage sites.

116. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 114 in which the expiration time initially assigned to the stored data item depends upon an expiration time assigned by the one of the multiple clients.

117-164. Canceled

165. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 464 114 wherein the one of the multiple clients uses a search engine to search the copy of the plurality of the data items of content accessed by the one of the multiple clients.

166. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 444 169 further comprising using information maintained by the data repository, about the number of times that stored data items have been accessed by the multiple clients or how recently the data items have been accessed, in an algorithm that orders Web search results.

167. (Canceled).

168. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 114 wherein the expiration time is assigned a value that indicates that the stored data item will never expire.

169. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 114 wherein the network is the Internet, the one of the multiple clients is a Web browser program, the content data item is a Web page, and the one of the network storage locations is a Web server.

170. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 114 wherein the one of the multiple clients reads a data item from the data repository.

171. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 114 wherein the one of the multiple clients writes a data item to the data repository.

172. (New) The method of claim 114 wherein the expiration time is assigned automatically based on a set of rules governing the assignment of expiration times to the plurality of data items of content accessed by the one of the multiple clients, without being assigned individually by the one of the multiple clients.

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173. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 114 wherein, after the expiration time has passed, the one of the multiple clients deletes the stored data item.